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Make Good Hay from Perennial Grasses

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AGRONOMY NOTES

SOILS • CROPS

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MAKE GOOD HAY FROM PERENNIAL GRASSES

George D. Corder

Good quality hay can be made from the perennial grasses if they are fertilized properly and mowed while in the boot stage.

The alfalfa weevil has reduced yields of alfalfa in Kentucky to the point where some farmers will be short of hay. Many of these fields have a good stand of grass. Some of the hay shortage can be eased by applying nitrogen fertilizers on these fields.

If the alfalfa was reduced to a stand of 25 percent or less during the past year, there is probably enough nitrogen stored in the soil to give good grass production this year. If the alfalfa has been out for a year or more, the grass will need nitrogen applications.

A soil test should be used as a guide for limestone, phosphate, and potash applications. Two to four tons of finely ground limestone per acre should be applied depending upon the degree of acidity. Twenty to eighty pounds of P_2O_5 and of K_2O per acre should be applied depending upon the soil test level. The limestone, phosphate, and potash can be applied any time during the year. However, if the soil is strongly acid or the phosphorus or potassium levels are low, these materials should be applied as soon as possible.

The maximum nitrogen response will not be obtained unless the acidity level is slightly acid to neutral and the phosphorus and potassium levels are high.

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